

How the Angoras Climbed  
Onion Peak  
by

1924

Ami Lagus

Sept. 13--Saturday Night

The moon was just making ready to appear, when a truck-full of noisy Angoras stopped at the gate of Windover Farm to pick me up. There were "Old Lady" Carlson, the musical Shatto, and little Tommy Thomasen all in a row; the center was occupied by the man-haters, Peg Thomasen, Esther Juntti, Frances Wedekin and "Weenie" Granlund; and oh! I almost forgot Myrtle Trogen, who, by the way, is quoted more frequently than Shakespeare at Angora meetings. Mr. Hildebrand by virtue of his station in life (Astorian, Kiwanian, member of the Angora Hiking Club, City Park Commissioner, etc. etc!) and his constitution, sat in front with Mr. Smith. The lesser lights, Mr. Hauke, Seymore, Hank Carlson and the guides Granlund, Johnson, and Berry filled in the space not occupied by the dunnage; while various small Smiths were scattered here and there.

We had scarcely begun to tune up before it was time to get off and consume hot dogs at Seaside. This precaution against starvation is customary whenever John essays to lead us into new country, being done in the memory of the infamous God's Valley trip.

Beyond Seaside the road is uncomfortably bumpy, but Peggy held us all spell-bound with her tales of near-adventure and hand-breath escapes encountered on the Sky Line Trail trip. The un-musical trio often rudely interrupted the narrator, but she overcame them with her

mighty voice and held forth nobly until we came to the camp site at Cole Creek-near-the-Nehalem very early Sunday morning.

The moon hung like a huge lantern over the small meadow and lighted the gentler and more poetic-minded better half of the party to a damp but picturesque spot near the water, where we dug the traditional hip and shoulder hole and spread our sleeping bags. The light of the bonfire proved more attractive to the men, who always have an eye open for comfort. The night was quiet (even Myrtle must have kept a tryst with silence, since she vows she did not sleep) but a full moon is no inducement to sound slumber, and I, for one, spent the few hours that remained before dawn in unprofitable tho not unpleasant meditation.

Sept. 14--Sunday

If you must choose between an alarm clock and Charlie Johnson, take the latter, for not only does he wake you up on time, he also builds the fire and cooks the coffee. By 5 o'clock most of us were either eating and drinking or lacing up shoes. Brothers may be a nuisance once in awhile, but they also find their use when it comes to packing lunches and washing dishes. Agnes Carlson deserves special commendation upon the way she is training Hank to become a patient, willing, and useful Angora.

When we were all ready, sometime around 7 o'clock, we started for a three-mile hike up an old logging railroad. Along the way we could see the mountain, sixteen miles away, Peggy thought. The road ended beside a steep bank below which ran Cole Creek. Here was Cougar Camp (I think the official name is Cole Creek Camp) distinguished by an old donkey engine, some rusty cans and a moss-bed under a girdled cedar tree. We crossed the creek and followed it

along the bank for about 1½ miles. It was a small but beautiful canyon, and there were deep, green pools where fat, lazy trout ought to dwell.

A cliff and a jumble of rocks soon barred our way, but since the trail ran above the cliff, we must needs be pulled and pushed up there also. There was a steep climb through the salal and salmonberry bush to a flat covered with windfalls, then up another brushy ridge and across another flat, gaining elevation all the time. Far be it from me to pass judgment on the trail; it would be like looking a gift horse in the mouth, but for all that, judgment was passed. Some thought it should be wider, some wanted it straight, others level and smooth, others again longed for a view, while Peg, who is going to sponsor a riding club, objected to the windfalls. I looked at the huge old trees, the mossy rocks and dark, silent, mysterious places and thought it a good place to be; but had anyone solicited my criticism six hours later (which no one did, and hence I give it unsolicited) I'd say I'd want it shorter. Men are so horribly vain that it's bad policy to praise them, but if we are to give honor where honor is due it goes to those who made the White Elephant Trail to Onion Peak.

We came to a little brook, creek, or stream which seemed as if made on purpose for a lunching place. "Are we near the top of the mountain Jawn?" "Pretty near," says he. "So leave your packs and we'll have coffee here coming back." Old Angoras know that John is either super-optimistic or plain lying when it comes to reckoning time and distances, so part of the lunches were tucked away safely under the owner's belts. I remembered the significance of those hot dogs, and also prepared.

We climbed onward and upward over the soft needle mulch. And then thru the trees we saw Onion Peak! Bare cliffs, straight up and down, it seemed, and how many hundred feet high, I don't know. Something to

conquer, that! The sight stirred our mountaineering spirit and we grew impatient at the distance that still separated us from our goal. Here the trail ended, and very very slowly we crept toward the base of those alluring cliffs, cutting brush and blazing trees, until the ground became more open and we could follow game trails which all seemed to lead toward our own objective. Some have a nose for news and some for scandal, but John's nose leads invariably to the right spot when it comes to climbing mountains. We came to a sort of draw or ravine between two rock masses, where grew vine maple and other shrubs and which was evidently a water course during the wet season. Some of the more venturesome went on ahead to reconnoiter, and we followed in the approved Angora style, climbing with hands and feet and knees and backs and faces, too. When someone appeared high above, you wondered how in the world they got there, and somehow you got there too, by traveling thru narrow tunnels or up rock "chimneys" or chinning up vine maple branches. A gallant man would have been in his element, there were so many perilous places where to save the ladies. How does the last man get up, when there is no one to push?

At a particularly ticklish spot about halfways up I came upon the scene of a little near-tragedy--Mr. Stokes had parked, refusing to go any farther. Imagine John's feelings on seeing his fondest hopes of a 100% ascent ruined by mere obstinacy! John's language was not intended for my innocent ears, so I stepped over and past the villainous Mr. Stokes. When I saw him on top half an hour later I idly wondered whether it was by force, persuasion or faith that he got there. Mr. Hildebrand also gave signs of weakening but he was easier to handle. John said (and I could swear to the accuracy of this quotation) "Come on, 'Gust, it's only 10 ft. more and practically level." So Gust came on over the

remaining 100 ft. of sheer cliff! John's motto should be--"Dead or alive, we get you there."

We all got there, even Mr. Hauke who declares Mt. Hood is a mere jaunt compared to it, and Myrtle, who really can go anywhere if she can hold somebody's hand. Official records show it took us longer to get to the top of Onion Peak than it did to gain the summit of Mt. Adams.

The smoke very effectively screened the view, which for all we know might be really wonderful. That's something to climb for the next time, which by mutual agreement is to be Labor Day, 1925. We took group pictures with one of these fancy timers that one waits for in vain and then goes off just when someone is going back to re-set it.

The inexhaustible Granlunds went down ahead to prepare coffee. I have discovered another of our illustrious guide's stratagems. When he wants an exhausted party to make good time, he always gives them something to hurry for--food, water, shelter, coffee, view, any of these according to circumstances. We tumbled down pretty fast and reached Coffee Creek about four o'clock. We dined. Again Emil and Hank were sent ahead to the main camp while we followed more slowly, anxious only to be out of the woods by dark which we just managed to do. In the twilight we stumbled thru the creek to Cougar Camp and reached the railroad just before darkness overtook us. There is one advantage to tie-walking after dark, when you stumble over the rails you know you are going off the track. As even an idiot can follow a railroad, John removed the speed limit and Winnie, Shatto, Peg, and I made a last spurt for camp. Almost within hailing distance of the campfire we met Emil with a hand-cart going up to relieve the rest of the party, especially Mr. Hildebrand, who was just a little bit tired. Someone had it all figured out that we had spent  $13\frac{1}{2}$  hours in actual hiking that day--a full day's work.

We didn't exactly look forward with joy to that ride back over the bumps. We had a brilliant idea of taking away the benches from the truck and sitting on the bottom, with the bedding rolls for back rests. While the back rests, the rest of you doesn't, and before we reached Black Bridge, I joined those who were sitting high and cold. If Hank hadn't held a sleeping bag as a windshield I'm afraid I wouldn't have lived to write this history. The moon shone fitfully; perhaps it didn't relish the sight we made in the bottom of that truck. Mr. Seymore, like a more famous individual, had no place to put his head, and consequently hung it outside the truck till I thought he'd strike it against every passing tree; but just at the psychological moment he'd jerk it in again. Agnes and Shatto looked the picture of cosiness snuggled up together but I heard a sigh and a faint muttering "Gosh, my legs!" Peg perched on high but was silent, Myrtle evidently slept, and Tommy tried to make her comfortable; Esther and Frances were buried somewhere up in front under the bags; Winnie sat like a squaw wrapped up in blankets and thoughts; Hank sat beside her and kept the wind off; I tried to keep myself from rolling over and obliterating Mr. Stokes, at the same time I was trying to keep Winnie from rolling over one of the small Smiths who sat in my lap. Mr. Hauke had as much trouble with his feet as Mr. Seymore with his head, and John talked, talked, talked to Charlie and Emil on the tail board.

So I left them again at the gate of Windover Farm, and they fared forth safely to the journey's end.